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Request for the inclusion of an item in the provisional agenda of the sixty-second session

Proclamation of the International Year of Human Rights Learning

Letter dated 18 July 2007 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Benin to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

In accordance with rule 13 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, I have the honour to request the inclusion of an item entitled "Proclamation of the International Year of Human Rights Learning" in the provisional agenda of the sixty-second session of the General Assembly.

The year 2008 will mark the sixtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. My country, Benin, considers that the international community should take this opportunity to launch a decisive initiative aimed at giving strong impetus to the appropriation of human rights by communities and their individual members.

Human rights learning will make it possible fully to integrate the understanding and exercise of human rights into all levels of behaviour and practice in order to restore human beings to their dignity and thus to translate into reality the principle of the universality of human rights.

In accordance with article 20 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, this request is accompanied by an explanatory memorandum giving the reasons for proclaiming the International Year of Human Rights Learning (annex I) and a draft General Assembly resolution (annex II).

I would be grateful if you would have this letter and its annexes circulated as a document of the General Assembly.

(*Signed*) Jean-Francis R. **Zinsou**
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

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Annex I

[Original: French]

Explanatory memorandum

Request for inclusion of an item entitled "Proclamation of the International Year of Human Rights Learning" in the provisional agenda of the sixty-second session of the General Assembly

The protection, defence and promotion of human rights is one of the essential objectives of the United Nations. Since its establishment, the United Nations has had bodies responsible for working towards these objectives. An essential element of its work is the adoption of international instruments in order to give legal existence to the universal values that are the basis of human rights and to define them with a view to their accurate identification, their understanding and their exercise by all individuals at every stage of their lives.

Adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was an important stage of the Organization's action in this area. The Declaration became the basis of the fundamental instruments which were adopted subsequently within the framework of the codification of human rights and whose implementation remains disappointing in many respects. Humankind continues to face situations that seriously violate human rights and human dignity; in particular, the persistence of extreme poverty constitutes a denial of the right to development.

In that regard, an understanding of human rights helps free the capacities of human beings and allows them to play a role in the betterment of their own living conditions. It should be recalled that recognition of the importance of this approach is the motive for the establishment of the independent commission to strengthen the capacities of poor people, which has been under discussion for several months.

The celebration of the sixtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights provides an excellent opportunity for reviewing the progress that has been made and launching a large-scale initiative to bring human rights to all corners of the Earth and for promoting, through widespread learning, understanding of human rights and their appropriation by the entire human race with a view to making them into a vital determinant of individual behaviour, and of the organization and evolution of the societies into which individuals are born, and in which they live and die.

The initiative to proclaim the Year stems from the Global Appeal for Human Rights Learning which was launched on 10 December 2005 by the People's Movement for Human Rights Learning, a non-governmental organization. This appeal was endorsed by some 40 leading figures from the political world, scientific circles and international civil society, making up a representative sample of humankind's conscience.

The proclamation of the year beginning 10 December 2007 as the International Year of Human Rights Learning will provide an opportunity for initiating and implementing targeted actions to disseminate the compendium of human rights in communities at every level and to foster understanding of such rights. This campaign will be supported by specific voluntary contributions from States, from

subregional, regional and international organizations, and also from those of civil society, non-governmental organizations and those of the private sector.

Activities will begin on 10 December 2007 and may continue beyond 2008. Particular attention will be given to promoting understanding of human rights in villages and in city suburbs so as to promote acceptance of responsibility for the underprivileged and make it easier for them to fit into modern society, thereby lifting all individuals for the benefit of human dignity. Thus the International Year of Human Rights Learning will further humanize relations within society at all levels and, in particular, will give globalization a more human face.

Given that promotion of human rights teaching and learning is well within their mandate, the Human Rights Council and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights will be responsible for coordinating the celebration of the Year and will undertake, to that end, to develop appropriate activities jointly with States, and with subregional, regional and international organizations concerned.

At the end of 2008, the General Assembly could, within the context of its sixty-third session, hold a high-level meeting to celebrate the anniversary of the Declaration of Human Rights, which could, inter alia, provide the framework for consideration of the activities carried out to promote human rights learning at all levels of society.

In order to permit a judicious evaluation and regular follow-up of the implementation of the lessons drawn from the celebration of the Year, the Secretary-General will be invited to submit a report on the implementation of the resolution to the General Assembly at its sixty-fourth session.

(*Signed*) Jean-Francis R. **Zinsou**
Charge d'affaires a.i.

Annex II

[Original: English]

Draft resolution

International Year of Human Rights Learning

The General Assembly,

Recalling that the purposes and principles contained in the Charter of the United Nations include encouraging respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all,

Reaffirming the central importance of human rights education in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights[1] and the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights on 25 June 1993,[2]

Recalling its resolution 60/251 of 15 March 2006, in which it decided that the Human Rights Council should promote human rights education and learning as well as advisory services, technical assistance and capacity-building,

Recalling also the 2005 World Summit Outcome, in which Heads of State and Government expressed their support for the promotion of human rights education and learning at all levels, including through the implementation of the World Programme for Human Rights Education, as appropriate, and encouraged all States to develop initiatives in that regard,[3]

Acknowledging that non-governmental organizations play an important role at the national, regional and international levels in the promotion and protection of human rights through education and learning,

Considering that the sixtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 2008 is a suitable occasion to redouble the Organization's efforts to promote a human rights culture worldwide through education and learning,

Convinced that human rights learning should serve to transform the holistic vision of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights into a way of life for people everywhere and a standard to measure the legitimacy of governments,

1. *Decides* that the year commencing on 10 December 2007 shall be proclaimed the International Year of Human Rights Learning, devoted to activities to broaden and deepen human rights learning as a way of life, on the basis of the principles of universality, impartiality, objectivity and non-selectivity, constructive international dialogue and cooperation, with a view to enhancing the promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development;

2. *Decides also* that the Human Rights Council shall promote the effective coordination and creative development of human rights learning among the Member States and within the United Nations system;

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[1] General Assembly resolution 217 A (III).

[2] A/CONF.157/24 (Part I), chap. III, paras. 78-82.

[3] General Assembly resolution 60/1, para. 131.

3. *Calls upon* Member States to cooperate among themselves to promote human rights learning and to undertake throughout the year and beyond at local, national and international levels activities aiming at ensuring the universal knowledge and implementation of human rights;

4. *Invites* the Human Rights Council and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to develop, in cooperation with civil society organizations and appropriate United Nations agencies and programmes, suitable activities to promote human rights learning at all levels of society;

5. *Decides* to devote a high-level segment at its sixty-third session to reviewing activities of Member States and civil society aiming at human rights learning in the context of the commemoration of the sixtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights;

6. *Requests* the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its sixty-fourth session a report on the implementation of the present resolution.